

By July 17: 1719

A

LETTER  
OF  
THANKS

W.D.B.

FROM A  
YOUNG CLERGYMAN,

To the Reverend  
Dr. Hare, Dean of *Worcester*,

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FOR HIS  
Visitation-Sermon at Putney.

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*Mutemus Clypeos, Danaumq; Insignia nobis  
Aptemus: Dolus, an Virtus, quis in Hoste requirat?*  
Virg.

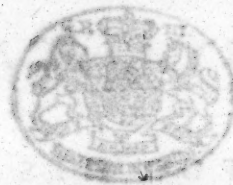
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Cont. of Account  
p. 18

Bishop Butler

A  
LETTER  
OF  
T. H. A. N. S.  
TO  
YOUNG CLERKMAN



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A

# Letter of Thanks

To the Reverend

Dr. *H A R E*, &c.

*Reverend S I R,*



Am at length fully sensible of the great Wisdom of the Advice you once gave me, with Relation to the Study of the Scriptures, which I was then entring upon with a Zeal and Resolution not to be cooled by your seasonable and friendly Admonition. Experience has in some measure convinced me, that the Dangers you threatened me with were not wholly chimerical; and I

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have



have Reason to apprehend that I may find those *Difficulties* and *Discouragements* that attend the *Study of the Scriptures* still growing upon me, in Proportion as my Enquiries into them are more successful. It was to me not the least of these Difficulties, that I wanted Skill to reconcile the inviolable Liberty of Conscience, and the Humility enjoyned by our Lord to his Apostles, with the Powers claimed by many of their pretended Successors: And unless I strenuously asserted their Claim to these Powers, I did not well see how to avoid falling under a heavy Censure, as betraying the Rights of my own Order, and being thought wanting in my Duty to my Superiours. But you, Sir, have happily extricated me out of this Perplexity, and shewed by your late excellent Performance that it is possible, by a skilful Address, effectually to serve the Cause of Christian Liberty, and at the same time to gain the Favour and Protection of our Ecclesiastical Governours, and the Applause of those who are most zealous for their Authority.



As I am very sensible of the Obligations I have to you on this Account, and willing that others may enjoy the same Advantage, I offer my Service to give a Clue to your artful Discourse of *Church-Authority*, which may be of Use to your less discerning Readers, by letting them into the true Design of it; and may free you from the Imputations of such as want Penetration to discover your real Sentiments, through the useful Disguise under which you insinuate them with so much Success.

It is very obvious to any one, who is tolerably acquainted with the Manner of Writing practised by the antient Masters of Eloquence, that throughout this whole Discourse, you have made Use of a Figurative kind of Rhetorick, which the Teachers of that Art recommend as the best Stratagem to persuade a Multitude enflamed with Passion, (which at present is the Case of every Audience where this Subject is treated of, ) by seeming to oppose the Opinion you secretly design to infuse

infuse into them. It is easy to apprehend that the Faults and Imperfections of every other kind of Writing make the chief Excellencies of this inverted Oratory; in which the most gross and palpable Absurdities, groundless Calumnies, and weak Arguments, set off with plain unanswerable Objections, are the proper Means of Persuasion. There are such numberless Beauties of this kind artfully disposed throughout your Sermon, that it must be confessed to be a very happy Instance of this Politick Art of Speaking, which is one of the finest Secrets of antient Eloquence, and such as few seem to be aware of at present. Your *English* Readers may see a Specimen of it in a celebrated Speech of *Agamemnon*, in the second Book of Mr. *Pope's* Translation of *Homer*, illustrated with the curious Remarks of a *Grecian* Critick; and they will doubtless own with Pleasure, that your Performance far exceeds the Poet's Invention. I will not undertake to unravel all the refined Artifice concealed in this inimitable Piece; it is enough for me to trace

trace out some of the more obvious Subtilties; since the more Masterly Strokes of Art will, I fear, escape my Observation.

I begin with the Preface, which may be considered as a Key to the following Sermon. And here having first shewn the Address of an Orator, in assuming a graceful Modesty, as an Excuse for suffering your self to be drawn into this Controversy, you proceed to acquaint your Readers, that "They who consider  
" this as a Visitation-Sermon, and know  
" the Author, will not wonder either at  
" the Choice of the Subject, or the side  
" you have taken in it." (*Pref. Page v.*) the Former being, it seems, most agreeable to the Inclinations of the Audience, the Latter to the Dexterity of the Preacher. The Subject you have chosen is the *Vindication of Church-Authority*, which you would seem to carry to as great a Height as most Writers who have appeared in the Defense of it: But (as I shall plainly shew) you in reality espouse the Opinion of those among us,  
who



who would reduce it to the lowest Standard.

I am therefore to consider you as only personating an Advocate for the Cause you have undertaken ; which you very artfully open, by declaring that “ you shall ever be an Enemy to Persecution,” the Imputation of favouring which your Clients take a great deal of conscious Pains to get clear of. This Declaration is (I doubt not) perfectly agreeable to your real Sentiments ; but under the Character you are supposed to speak it, it is to be understood as a meer Feint : And to shew it to be such, you have qualified it with such Restrictions, as leave you a Pretense to persecute all who are not exactly in your own Sentiments. “ Your Words are these, —  
 “ I shall ever be an Enemy to Persecution, and cannot think it equitable in  
 “ the Governours of the Church to take  
 “ the utmost Advantage of severe Laws  
 “ against innocent well-meaning People,  
 “ while they continue such ; much less  
 to

" to call in the secular Arm, to oppress  
 " and crush under it's weight vertuous  
 " and learned Men, for the Mistakes  
 " their disinterested Pursuits of Truth  
 " and Knowledge may happen to lead  
 " them into ; " — (*Pref. page v, vi.*) Thus  
 you are very careful to preserve to the  
 Governours of the Church, the Power  
 of persecuting, though you would have  
 them a little tender of using it : You  
 do not condemn such severe Laws, as  
 would oppress and crush not only inno-  
 cent and well-meaning People, but even  
 vertuous and learned Men ; though you  
 do not indeed think it equitable that  
 the utmost Advantage of those Laws  
 should be taken against such Persons.  
 But after all this Shew of Candour and  
 Tenderneſs, it will be hard to find any  
 that have the Misfortune to differ from  
 you in Opinions, settled by your Church-  
 Authority, whom you will allow to be  
 innocent, much less whom you will  
 esteem vertuous and learned. " You  
 (it seems) " think you may without  
 " Breach of Charity suppose, that the

“ Persuasions of the several Sects that  
 “ dissent from the established Church  
 “ are not sincere in such a Sense as will  
 “ excuse a Separation.” (Sermon, *Page*  
 42, 43.) They who dissent from the estab-  
 lished Church cannot therefore be very se-  
 cure that they are reckoned by you among  
 the innocent well-meaning People, whom  
 (while they continue such) you would  
 have skreened from the utmost Advan-  
 tage of severe Laws, always ready to be  
 put in Execution against them at the  
 Discretion of the Governours of the  
 Church. And you confess that “ you  
 “ cannot but own yourself filled with  
 “ Indignation and Astonishment, at the  
 “ loose Principles of some Writers, ”  
 (*Pref. page ix.*) whom you load with  
 such a Variety of Calumnies, that they  
 can scarce be thought to be favoured  
 with any degree of your Esteem. It is  
 easy to distinguish the Persons glanced at  
 in this Censure, (which I understand in  
 you as a secret Reproach of the scanda-  
 lous Treament they have met with from  
 Others;) and if their eminent Vertue and  
 Learning



Learning be called in question, I suppose none after them will have the Vanity to hope his Pretensions to that Character will be admitted. There is indeed one Particular in which they can scarce be thought to come up to the Qualifications of those intituled to your Favour, or Pity, and that is the Circumstance of being misled in the Search of Truth and Knowledge: Their Mistakes might perhaps have pleaded for Indulgence, but Truths (which are more odious) are not so easily forgiven. Thus it is evident from the Restrictions you have laid down, that none who are not entirely in your Sentiments, or rather in your Interests, could have any Ground to hope that the utmost Advantage of severe Laws would not be taken against them, unless a more favourable Construction were put on their Opinions, than you approve, or allow.

THE treacherous Pretenses to Moderation affected by such as maintain Persecuting Principles, being thus exposed by your pretended Enmity to Persecution,

you draw up a heavy Charge against those " Who declare against all Authority in the Church, &c.," (*Pref. page vi, vii.*) a Charge in which by your own Confession the Adversaries you have to do with are wholly unconcerned ; since you acknowledge (*Serm. p. 35.*) that " they allow there is somewhere a proper Authority lodged to appoint Rules of Church-Discipline, and to settle a Method of publick Worship, " — This is a plain Indication that you secretly favour the opposite side, since you purposely chuse to aim your Arguments in such a Manner, as to fly over the Heads of those they seem to be levelled at.

THE next Paragraph informs us that " In this Discourse the Reader has your Thoughts only as to the Power and Authority of the Ministers and Governors of the Church, and that as it appears upon the Face of Scripture, without any Regard to Modern Systems; " (*Pref. page viii.*) I shall therefore particularly consider this part  
of

of your Sermon, in which you professedly give us your real Thoughts, not without insinuating that there is some Opposition between the Scriptures and the modern Systems on this Subject : And I will undertake to shew from thence, that you have reduced Church-Authority to as low a Pitch as any of those you pretend to write against.

THE following remarkable Words,  
 “ That you have asserted throughout  
 “ what appeared to you to be true, whether  
 “ it were necessary for the Cause  
 “ you maintain or not ;” (*Pref p. viii.*)  
 may serve to let an intelligent Reader into the secret Scheme of this whole Discourse : since it is notorious that you have advanced many unanswerable Objections against the Opinion you seem to espouse, but not one Argument in Defense of it. The Weakness of which is not so visible, that it could never be designed to impose on any Man of common Sense.

HAVING



HAVING gone through the Preface, I pass on to the Sermon, which begins with a common Complaint of the Insincerity of such as appeal to Scripture, as a Rule of Controversy, and yet refuse to be determined by it: And it is affirmed by you, that none have less followed, or more perverted this Rule, than those who contend for a much stricter Adherence to it, than you seem to approve, or even to allow. You instance in the late Disputes concerning Church-Authority, which have been carried on by those who are very falsely represented as opposing it, with such a professed Regard to the Scriptures, that it is made almost a Crime in them to have been too tender of derogating from their Authority; and yet they are at the same time taxed with such gross Prevarication, as if they openly refused to pay the least Deference to it.

THIS Charge, which looks a little improbable, is supported by an elaborate Dissertation on the Grammatical Sense of several Texts of Scripture, which these  
Writers

Writers have not, I think, ever attempted to pervert. This therefore, I suppose, was laid hold of as a favourable Opportunity to display your masterly Skill in Criticism, without any Disadvantage to your pretended Adversaries, who are not in the least hurt by it. I observe, that though you could not so far dissemble this Skill, for which are so justly valued, as to make any critical Observation unworthy of your self, you have notwithstanding condescended (doubtless not undesignedly) to argue from the Passages you so justly criticize on, with the utmost Weakness. It is a sufficient Answer to all the Reasonings drawn by you from thence, that the Authority of the Apostles themselves was not Absolute, and that they expressly disclaimed a Dominion over the Faith of Christians. Even the Spirits were commanded to be tried, before they could warrantably be received; much less ought an implicate Faith and Obedience to be paid to the unexamined Dictates of any fallible Teachers, whose Authority is as far beneath that of Divine Inspi-

Inspiration, as Earth is removed from Heaven.

YOUR next Argument for the great Authority you attribute to the Governours of the Church, is taken from the Commission given by our Saviour to the Apostles in the Power of the *Keys*, the Power of *binding* and *loosing*, and the Power of *remitting* and *retaining* Sins, (p. 21.) You do not distinctly tell us what you think was intended by these several Powers, which you affect to illustrate by the like figurative Allusions peculiarly applied to Christ himself, and expressing the Powers he was invested with after his Resurrection. From hence you infer, that these Expressions imply “a very great Commission and Authority;” too great indeed to be, in the proper Sense of them, communicated to any mere Mortal. This you appear to be very sensible of, and accordingly conclude your Discourse on this Head, which is, I confess, very artfully confused, by declaring, that “whatever the Words of this Commission precisely mean,



“ mean, as spoken to the Apostles, ’tis  
 “ easy to see what they do not mean ;  
 “ ’tis easy to see they do not give the Suc-  
 “ cessors of the Apostles, who have not  
 “ the Gift of discerning the Secrets of  
 “ Men’s Hearts, a Power of *remitting* or  
 “ *retaining* the Sins of this or that indivi-  
 “ dual Person absolutely.” (p. 26.) Thus  
 having in a few Lines unravelled the  
 Work of five or six Pages, you pleasantly  
 expose your pretended or real Adversaries  
 (I do not say which) by acutely observ-  
 ing that the Opposers of “ absolute Abso-  
 “ lutions, oppose a Phantom of their  
 “ own. This, you say, is a Power no  
 “ Church, not even that of *Rome*, ever  
 “ claim’d; all sides have confessed their  
 “ Absolutions to be valid only conditional-  
 “ ly, (*Clave non errante* ;” nor did any one  
 ever question their Validity in this Sense.  
 This perhaps might have passed upon us  
 by the Help of your ingenious Raillery,  
 had we not seen so many repeated Ex-  
 amples, during the Course of this present  
 Controversy, that notwithstanding such  
 plain Confessions extorted by the Force of  
 C Truth,

Truth, the contrary Doctrines have with dextrous Inconsistency been sometimes insinuated in the very same Sentence. In the present Case it is notorious, that the poor deluded People of the Church of *Rome* are as effectually made to depend on the vain Absolutions of their Priests, as if they were expressly maintained to be of absolute Authority: Nor can those amongst us who have of late been so zealous for the new Doctrine of Authoritative Absolution, with all their subtil Distinctions, prevent the like gross Mistakes from spreading amongst their ignorant Votaries.

I come now to consider your Manner of stating the Power of Church-Governours, which I take to be the Master-Piece of your whole Discourse. You enter upon this Part of your Subject with a kind of artful Disdain, as if you esteemed it a great Condescension to engage in it; and declare, that “ it concerns  
 “ those who are to obey, whether in Spi-  
 “ ritual or in Civil Matters, to inform  
 “ them.

“ themselves of their Duty, and conse-  
 “ quently of the Extent of the Authori-  
 “ ty of those set over them, lest they  
 “ bring on themselves the Guilt and Pu-  
 “ nishment of Disobedience,” (p. 28.)

This necessarily obliges the governed Part of the Church to an Examination of the Lawfulness of the Commands, and the Reasonableness of the Doctrines, imposed on them by their Governours, which make up the Subject Matter of that Authority, of the Extent of which they are to inform themselves; and consequently, it gives the utmost Scope and Latitude to Private Judgment, for which the greatest Patrons of Religious Liberty have ever contended. It is true, you intimate to them only the Danger of Disobedience which they may incur by this Neglect; but the Danger of an undue Compliance is infinitely greater; since it is far more excusable to disobey even the just Commands of Men through an over-scrupulous Fear of offending God, than to transgress the Laws of God out of a blind Submission to the Decrees of a



Consistory, a Synod, or a General Council, or even the united Authority of all Mankind.

THE Force of this large Concession, which would not have been admitted by the Opposers of Private Judgment, had it been understood, is finely concealed under the Magisterial Air, with which it is delivered. This doubtless made it pass on the unthinking Part of your Audience, who are fond of every thing that looks like Authority : But their more discerning Adversaries know the Advantage it gives them too well, to quarrel with the Favour for the ungraceful manner of granting it.

AFTER having thus admonished the People of the Obligation they are under, to inform themselves of the Extent of the Authority exercised over them by their Ecclesiastical Governours, you proceed to point out to them the Sources from whence this Power is derived, and the Measures by which it is to be regulated. These  
you

you make to be, First, The Scriptures; Secondly, The Practise of the Church in the best and purest Ages; And lastly, The Nature of Society.

THE Scriptures must of Consequence be allowed by you, to be a sufficient Rule to judge of those Powers; because you acknowledge, "The Powers of Church-Governours may, without much Difficulty, be drawn from Scripture; and consequently, the Nature and Degree of the Obedience due to them, &c." (p. 28.) Yet notwithstanding this Sufficiency of Scripture, you affirm "That he must never have looked into Scripture, who is capable of thinking it a perfect Rule of external Worship and Discipline;" And therefore you propose to take in the Writings of the Primitive Church, as a Supplement to Scripture in these Points, (p. 29.) Now if these Matters are regulated by Divine Revelation, that alone is a sufficient Rule; if they are not, (as you seem to think,) there can be no need of having Recourse to these Writers; since

since the Church has still the same Power to alter, as she had first to appoint, a Method of external Worship and Discipline, not being tied down to any Model of humane Contrivance, however ancient.

And as to Matters of Faith, all the Authority you allow to the Primitive Writers of the Church is, That the Sense they put on any Passages of Scripture, the meaning of which cannot otherwise be determined, (for if it can, you allow that could all the Fathers be supposed to agree in a different Sense, it would be of no weight;) if it be not the true Sense, is at least a good one, (p. 41.) which is so pleasant an Instance of your Deference to their Judgment, as cannot be disagreeable to the rudest Contemners of Antiquity.

THE third way of deducing Church-Power, which you take from the Nature of Society, "you confess is nicer, and "requires more Caution than the other

" two,



“ two, and should always be considered  
 “ joyntly with them. Otherwise we  
 “ shall be apt to conclude, that the  
 “ Church, in Fact, has such a Power,  
 “ because ’tis, in our Opinion, conveni-  
 “ ent it should, (p. 29.) Here again  
 you are very careful to deny to the  
 Church that *Power of the Sword*, or *Share*  
*in the Civil Judicature*, which, from the  
 Nature of Society, you have argu’d is ne-  
 cessary, and the Church has a Right to,  
 by the Assistance of the Civil Magistrate,  
 (p. 34, 35.) For as you allow nothing to  
 be concluded singly from this Rule, it is  
 manifest that you do not give the Church  
 a Power of distributing Temporal Re-  
 wards and Punishments, however con-  
 venient or necessary it may be in the E-  
 steem of some Church-men; since it can-  
 not be proved to belong to the Church by  
 either of the two former Rules; it being  
 neither warranted by the Gospel, which  
 give not the least Colour for it, nor coun-  
 tenanced by the purest Ages of Christi-  
 anity, which were providentially depriv-  
 ed of it.

THIS

THIS Power, which can at best serve only to make Men profess the Truths they do not believe, and which in Fact has generally been employed to force them to embrace such Errors as they abhorred; as it is only calculated to serve the Ends of an Earthly Government, has been insisted on to be wholly unfit to be applied to the Affairs of a Kingdom, which is not of this World: And you, Sir, have clearly expounded the Text (*John* xviii. 36.) in Favour of this Opinion; though you slyly introduce it with this short Preface, *that it is nothing to the Purpose.*

YOUR Account of it stands thus,  
 “ Our Saviour is accused to the Roman  
 “ Governour, as setting up to be King  
 “ of the *Jews* to the Prejudice of *Tiberius*;  
 “ Our Saviour, *who came into the*  
 “ *World to bear witness to the Truth*, could  
 “ not but own what was true; but adds,  
 “ that his Kingdom was such an one  
 “ as need give the Emperor no Uneasiness;  
 “ that it was not of this World;  
 “ &c.”

" &c. " (page 31.) It is well known that a pretended Vicegerent of Christ, some Ages after, supplanted a Successor of *Tiberius*, and usurped a Dominion over the whole *Roman* Empire. It is therefore evident that our Saviour must be understood to have disclaimed, both for himself and his Ministers, that Temporal Power, by which, though at first exercised precariously by the Favour of the Civil State, the Empire was afterwards subverted; otherwise he could not have affirmed with Truth, that his Kingdom was such as could give no Uneasiness to the Emperour.

THIS Exposition is evidently in Favour of those, who argue that the Governors of the Church are excluded by this Text from all Temporal Power: And the Force of it is no otherwise to be evaded, than by distinguishing between the Church and the Kingdom of Christ, as you in Effect own by making a Distinction between them. It must be confessed that though the Kingdom does

D                      indeed



indeed signify the Church, it signifies the Church under a different State, to which the present State is only a Preparation; and in this Sense it is explained by you, (page 31.) that “if βασιλεία, (the “ Kingdom) signifies the Church, ’tis “ the πᾶσι βασιλευσάντων, the People govern- “ ed by Christ,” or the Subjects of his future Kingdom. This is fully sufficient for the present Purpose, it being all that is contended for that the Church in this Preparatory State has not any Temporal Power. As to the future Kingdom of Christ, the Members of it not being openly declared, are invisible to us; and could they be known with the greatest Certainty, yet since they are not already invested with that degree of Glory that will be communicated to them, they could not, under the Notion of Members of this Kingdom, claim any earthly Dominion, before the glorious Reign of Christ shall commence, when they shall indeed reign with him upon the Earth \*

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\* Vide 2 Pet. iii. 13. *Isaiah* lxxv. 17. *Rev.* xxi. *Rev.* ii. 26, 27. *Psal.* ii. 8, 9. *Rev.* v. 10. *Dan.* vii. 10, 22, 27. *Rev.* xi. 15, &c. *Rev.* xx. 4.

THE Scriptures being thus found to be the great Rule from whence the Measures of these Powers are to be taken, and all other Methods of stating them being effect set aside by you, as insufficient, you come at length to settle the Authority of the Governours of the Church in the Matters of Faith (which is the principal Point on which this whole Controversy turns) upon the Basis of Scripture. And here, you say, " you " are willing to own, that the Ministers " or Governours of the Church in the " first Times, even the Apostles themselves, as to Matters of Faith and " Doctrine, had no Authority but that " of Witnesses; they delivered nothing " but what they declared they received, " &c." p. 36. You carry this still higher by observing that " The Belief and Submission required to what was taught " immediately by Christ himself, and " the Holy Spirit, are required on the " same Account; that they also taught " what they received." On this Foot you set the Authority denied to other

Teachers, " that they proposed nothing  
 " to be believed or done as necessary,  
 " but what they had received." And  
 that with great Reason; since they  
 would otherwise have had greater Au-  
 thority than the Apostles, nay, than our  
 Lord himself, or the Holy Spirit.

Now you do not pretend that the  
 Teachers in these latter Ages have re-  
 ceived any thing either by immediate  
 Inspiration, or by Tradition; but " what  
 " Tradition could not do, (you say)  
 " could be supplied only by a Written  
 " Rule, by the Books that compose the  
 " New Testament." It is therefore evi-  
 dent that their Authority, or, which is  
 the same thing, their Testimony, is con-  
 fined by you to the Letter of Scripture,  
 which alone they can be said to have re-  
 ceived, though not immediately from  
 God, yet as delivered down from those  
 to whom it was first committed by him.  
 If therefore they impose any Interpreta-  
 tions, or Inferences, of their own, for  
 the Truth of which they have no Divine  
 Au-



Authority, they are guilty of the great Presumption of speaking of themselves; a Liberty not taken by Christ or his Apostles, much less to be allowed to them. Thus it is undeniable, that all Decrees of Councils, all Creeds, or Articles of Faith and Religion, enjoined by Humane Authority, are condemned by your Regulation of Church-Power, if they exceed the Words of Scripture, which alone the Persons employed in these Acts of Church-Government can pretend that they have received from God.

THIS Argument is so strong and plain, and set by you in such a glaring Light, that it is strange the Tendency of it could escape the discerning Audience you so happily passed it upon. It is a Sign you perfectly knew their Capacity, otherwise you would not so far have trusted to it: and though your Conduct in this Point has proved successful, it must be esteemed a very dangerous Stroke of Art,

I am the more surprized at your seeming Unwariness in advancing this bold Argument, when I consider the slender Evasion it is guarded with; which is meerly the idle Cavil used by the Popish Writers, when they are arguing against the Sufficiency of Scripture. You say, that “ if these (*viz.* the Books of the New Testament) be received as the Rule of our Faith, ’tis certain ’tis not the Sound of the Words is so, but the Sense of them. But how is this to be certainly known? And who has a Right to interpret Scripture with that Authority, that his Interpretations ought to be submitted to? ” The sacred Words of Scripture are not lightly to be termed insignificant Sounds; they are doubtless such as more truly express the Mind of God, than any Expressions the Wisdom of Men can substitute in the Place of them, tho’ they may not perhaps altogether so happily express what the Interpreters would have them signify: And wherever they are designed to be mysterious, no prying Curiosity of Mortals can

can penetrate into the hidden Meaning of them. And as long as none can boast of having immediately received of God any Interpretation of Scripture, when you ask, " Who has a Right to interpret Scripture with that Authority that his Interpretations ought to be submitted to?" it is the same thing, according to your Scheme of Church-Authority, as if you had demanded, Who has a Right to place himself on the Throne of God, and to assume a Power not exercised by Christ himself, of declaring from thence such Doctrines as this fallible Interpreter *has not received*, and of dictating such Laws to Mankind, as *terminate in his own Authority?*

IT is observable, that you infer the Necessity of such an Authoritative Interpretation, from the Uncertainty of the Sense of Scripture: And yet, when you afterwards lay down Restrictions to this Right of interpreting, you confine it (very inconsistently with that Pretense) to such Passages as are plain and easy to  
the



the meanest Understanding; or to such at least, the Sense of which can certainly be determined. As to those Places of Scripture, the Sense of which cannot be determined with Certainty, you own they are, strictly speaking, of no use to the forming a Summary of Faith; at least in the Judgment of the Reformed Churches, who acknowledge the Scriptures for a plain and perfect Rule, (p. 39, 40.) "Were the Reformed Churches true to this Principle, there would (you say) be little Occasion to dispute about the Right of interpreting": But as you here insinuate that they are not true to it, you tacitly own that there is just Reason to dispute this Right with them.

THE Sum of your Discourse on this Head is, that in every Church "the Governours must have a Right to interpret, so far as is necessary to appoint certain Forms of sound Words, &c." p. 41. This is granting them just nothing; since it follows from what you have laid down, that it is not only unnecessary, but even un-

unwarrantable, for them to add a Tittle to the Letter of Scripture, which alone is abundantly sufficient to supply Forms of sound Words for all the several Purposes you mention.

You very justly slight the Popular Objections made to Church-Power, as if it encroached upon the Authority of the Magistrate, and the Liberty of the People, (p. 43.) since, as it is stated by you, it must be allowed to be innocent in both these respects. But you allow that  
 “ There are indeed Times and Places in  
 “ which spiritual Power exceeds its  
 “ Bounds; and the Rights both of Prince  
 “ and People are invaded :” And the following Words seem artfully designed to instil into your Hearers a Jealousy of this Ecclesiastical Usurpation. You assure them with a very peremptory Air, that “ there  
 “ was never less Occasion for such Complaint than in this Age, and in this  
 “ Nation; where the Christian Laity, as  
 “ such, have all the Liberty the most Licentious can desire; a great deal more  
 E “ than

“ than is consistent with good Discipline.” The invidious mention of the Laity, whom you tax with Licentiousness, and threaten with Discipline, is perfectly well calculated to fire them with Animosity against the Advocates for this rigid Authority ; especially since you do not complain that the Clergy are allowed too great Freedom ; being conscious ( I presume ) of the severe Restraints they lie under, with regard to their Religious Opinions, and of the great Difficulties and Discouragements they meet with, in those Studies, to which they ought more peculiarly to dedicate themselves.

The Lay Part of the Audience being thus alarmed, you go on to ask with great Disdain, “ What then can be the  
 “ Meaning of those loud Harangues in  
 “ behalf of the Ecclesiastical Liberty of  
 “ the People, when no Body is touching  
 “ it ? ” This sure must warm the Hearts of your Hearers with Indignation, since at the same time while you thus arrogantly insulted our Fears, we were threatned  
 with



with an Invasion, (since happily defeated) which had it succeeded, would have destroyed both our Religious and Civil Liberties; and which the most Disaffected among us were chiefly pleased with, in hopes to gratify their sacred Lust of Ecclesiastical Tyranny.

HERE you take Occasion to celebrate, with a just Triumph, the safe and flourishing Condition of the Church of *England*, as secure in the Affections of the People, the Protection of the Laws, and the Wisdom of His Majesty, who has very lately declared, *he has its Honour and Security near at Heart*, (p. 46.) This is a severe Rebuke to those who are ever maliciously foreboding imaginary Dangers to the Church, and insolently affronting His Majesty's Royal Cares for its Support and Welfare.

THE last and finest Stroke of your Art is, the introducing the Character of our excellent PRIMATE, as an awful Machine to deliver your own Sentiments

with the greater Weight and Authority. This amiable Character (which was so well established before his Grace's Advancement to the High Station he now adorns, that it receives no new Lustre from thence) is not only an Embellishment to your Discourse, but a glorious Skreen to protect the great Truths to which it gives a Sanction: while you represent to us with all the glowing Paint of Eloquence, how he governs in the Meekness of Wisdom, and can be zealous for Truth without breathing Persecution. You proceed in the same lofty Strain to inform us, that " He knows a just Authority may be  
 " maintained without pretending to In-  
 " fallibility; that our Establishment, tho'  
 " imperfect, as it is Humane, may, and  
 " ought to be defended as a very good  
 " one"; (and consequently no farther than it is such) " and as to any Defects in it,  
 " that some Things may be altered with-  
 " out giving up every Thing, and the  
 " Constitution mended without subvert-  
 " ing it." (p. 46, 47.)

I cannot here forbear expressing my Admiration of the Force of your wondrous Address; by which the very same Opinions that have of late been treated with the utmost Contempt and Virulence, when maintained by others in an open artless manner, are insinuated by you, in their utmost Latitude, with a general Approbation and Applause.

THUS, Sir, I have presumed to point out, with an unskilful Hand, some of the less concealed Elegancies of this admirable Discourse, for the Satisfaction and Advantage of some of your weaker Friends, who had they been in any Degree capable of imitating your happy Conduct in their Writings, might at least have escaped Censure, if they had not attained to equal Honours with your self. It may, perhaps, be feared that I may in some Measure disappoint the good Effects it might have on our common Enemies, by letting them too far into the secret Design of it: But for this we need be in no Pain, since the Stupidity of the Generali-



ty of them is so invincible, that they will never be made to perceive it; and the Honour of having you for their supposed Champion is so great, that the few discerning Persons amongst them will never be so impolitick as to own you for an Adversary.

I heartily congratulate your Success in this new Method of indirectly propagating Truth; and remain, with a just Sense of your great Skill and Dexterity,

Learned S I R,

*Your great Admirer,*

*and obliged humble Servant,*



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